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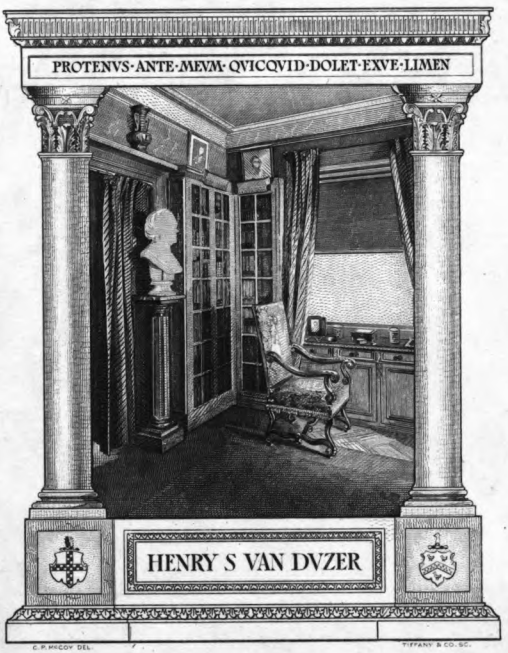

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MR. THACKERAY'S SKETCHES.

It is just eleven years since the author of 'Vanity Fair' and 'The Newcomes' passed away from among us, in all the power and vigour of life, unexhausted by the labour which a toiling literary man, more almost than any other professional worker, has to go through on his way to that highest eminence of success which so few ever reach. He had been an artist, he had been a journalist, he had been, strange as it seems to say so, only a semi-successful writer for many years of his life, writing books which got their full meed of approbation only after his great work had carried him at a leap to the summit of popularity. At last, however, he had attained all that the ambition of an author could desire—the readiest and most enthusiastic welcome for all that he chose to give to the world, the plaudits of all whose applause was worth caring for, along with that echo from the crowd which is the true test of fame in the wider sense of the word; and so much solid reward for his labours as gave substance and meaning to all the rest. His life, as everybody knows, had been overshadowed by one of the heaviest domestic clouds that can come upon a young man in the beginning of his career, which he had borne manfully with courage and patience and cheerful steadfastness; and in the blessed course of compensating time had recovered through his children the happiness of home. All this, fortunately, he had attained while still in the full flood of a genial and friendly existence. His labours were many, but they were at length fully recompensed; and no failure of strength warned him to leave them off. He had troops of friends and universal appreciation and honour wherever he went; his name was one of the foremost in his country, and his character understood and loved. Thus happy was he above the assaults of adverse fortune and all those evils which in his day he had met and encountered like a man, when suddenly in the night, without warning or the knowledge even of those most dear to him, there came a secret messenger and summoned him unexpectedly out of all this warmth and comfort. Without time to breathe a last wish or say a farewell, he was withdrawn from the world in the strength of life, in the fulness of fame and of genius. There is something very terrible to the common imagination in such a fate: no lingering of sickness or long languor of suffering affects the mind so much as the shock and terror of a sudden disappearance like this; and yet, when we consider it calmly, what could be more happy? All the growing shadows of mortality, the waning days, the fading light, the time when desire fails and the grasshopper becomes a burden, are escaped by such a swift conclusion. Of all things there is nothing so sad as the last chapter in life, through which the old man lingers, seeing his friends drop around him, and mournfully awaiting the moment when he too shall drop, like so many others, into the long-waiting and clearly visible grave. But in the other case all these sorrows are avoided. The man who dies in middle age has all that is best in life without its saddest drawbacks and burdens; and

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The Orphan of Pimlico; and other Sketches, Fragments, and Drawings. By William Makepeace Thackeray. London: Smith, Elder, & Co.

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there are cases in which so sudden a death seems a special privilege of heaven to those who have stood bravely at their post, and borne the heat of the day and the sore labours of life without fear or flinching. This was what our great humorist did, bravely, tenderly, steadfastly, through pangs and discouragements which would have taken the heart out of many a common man. And in the midst of his days, in the full flush of his fame, while yet his eye was not dim nor his force abated, but when by strain and determination he had fulfilled the task he put upon himself and provided for those most dear to him—then he was taken away at a stroke, his work, uncompleted, dropping from his hands.

Of the life thus ended no formal record has been made; nor indeed has any memento of it been given to the world till now. And there is something unusually touching in the publication at this especial moment of the book of sketches, reproduced from the scraps and fragments which Thackeray left behind him. It is not the great author, the social philosopher and moralist, the famous writer of novels, the cynic, as some men think him, but a domestic figure, all softened, mellowed, and illuminated by tender lights of love, which appears to us in this volume with genial smile and playful looks, kindest, gentlest, most indulgent of men, "my father," no other title thought of. His children were moved to this undertaking by natural displeasure at the publication of a book professing to contain his drawings and called by his name, in which much extraneous matter was mixed up, and youthful scribbles that did him no manner of justice. After they had undertaken this gentle revenge upon the intruders who attempted to *exploiter* his memory, the work grew upon them, charming tehm with a thousand soft recollections of their own early days and his constant tenderness. The consultations and arrangements and anxious selection of what was best, the oversight and care required to make sure that the reproduction was as perfect as possible, charmed and interested beyond measure the two whom he had left behind, and to whom he had been the most beloved and playful companion as well as the kindest of fathers. What talks there were of the past, what fond thoughts and natural tears, out of which time had taken the bitterness! Alas! before the book came to the world, there was but one left to look over, with a pang of renewed and added anguish, the records of the old life, of which she alone remained the sole survivor. Like her father, though many years younger, out of her happiness and hopes, in the flush of womanly maturity and domestic blessedness, Thackeray's youngest daughter, Mrs. Leslie Stephen, had been taken away like him, the abrupt messenger coming to her also like a thief in the night. And now what the two planned and guided to the verge of publication, the one puts silently forth into the world. A more touching monument of the little group now severed, father and daughters, just caught in their domestic life by that side gleam of fame, which reveals without profanity the sanctity of the now vacant home, could not by possibility be given to the public.

After what we have said, and with the tears in our voice, we cannot turn at once to the book itself, so full of genial fun and amused perception of everything that was going on in those days that are past. The man himself was more memorable, more noticeable than his sketches. No memoir of him has been given to the world; and, indeed, the memoirs of his contemporaries which have come into be-

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ing give little encouragement for that vulgarising and undesirable process. It would be better for the fame, and better for the personal appreciation, which we give with no ungrudging hand to those who please us, if the art of biography were less largely and less volubly exercised; and Thackeray's children have done well to obey his injunctions. But yet, if it had been possible to put in a book the life which was so full of suffering and patience, of disappointment, of gaiety, and love, and laughter, and tears, what a picture it might have made! Such glimpses of it as his friends have put aside in their recollections are full of the interest which attends every courageous warfare with trouble and sorrow, manfully carried on, not without sinkings of the heart, not without failures and imperfections, yet always showing steadfast progress: the head aloft, the heart brave even when near breaking; and many a jest and laugh breaking in between, sweet, natural gaiety which defied grief; and all the tricks and quips of humour ready to burst forth on the very edge of pain, and mock it, though the jester felt it to the depths of his kind and tender soul. There is no such true symbol of life, we have often thought, as the progress of a ship over the sea, setting out in full and fresh array of perfect sails and spars, flags flying, the waves crisping round the adventurous bows, caressing them with soft splash and rush and playful sprinkling of spray, the wind like laughter in the cordage: till the storm comes, seizing the vessel in a sudden agony, making her reel and shiver, stripping her bare, and tossing her like a nutshell between the black sky and blacker sea. Then after the shock comes a pause, and one feels again a throb of purpose in the battered thing, a working of the helm in obstinate resistance to the waves, a conscious struggle of the humanity within against the terrible forces without; and then a gradual recovery and steadying of the shattered hull, a shaking out of the torn canvas, a renewed progress with all the old gay accompaniments, as if the storm had never been — till the next comes. So it is with every man and woman. Caught out of their first confidence in life to a fierce struggle with some gigantic primitive misery, for a moment crushed and silenced, then coming to life again with sobs and choking breath, setting a brave face to the world and to their trouble, keeping on, overcoming, growing gay—till the next assault, which, like the first, is shaken off too after a time; the bleeding, throbbing, suffering creature never giving up its individual protestation against everything less noble than that patient, courageous, persistent life which was not given by God to be crushed, but to be maintained. Those who sink in sullen woe and make no resistance, and those who are beaten down into a dull and dismal languor of weakness, are not half so interesting or attractive as the valiant soul which cries and weeps and laughs and struggles, and will not be subdued whatever happens. Of such was Thackeray. How he righted himself after the commotions through which he passed—how he took up his burden and bore it like a man — how even in his youth he made himself the tender nurse of his little children, and denied himself, and held on, tears in his heart if not in his eyes, but smiles on his face, with outbreaks of merry laughter and jest and song, blossoming over the tribulations and privations and hard struggles of life,—this is a story which we have no commission to tell, nor even the knowledge necessary to do so; but which is known to many, as spectator

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know a portion of the drama going on before them — though it was never revealed or debased through partial telling, by himself.

The character of his genius, however, and the way in which it came to maturity, is safer ground, and here we may speak without hesitation. The first profession he proposed to himself seems to have been that of an artist, and his first books even, after the pen gained the day over the pencil, were illustrated by himself. From art he naturally strayed into writing, working at both together for many of the best years of his life, writing for the papers like his own Warrington, and forming that light opinion of the powers of those who did so, which he afterwards embodied in the talk of his favourite character. Then came 'Sketch-books,' containing that curious amalgamation of the two crafts which no one had done more completely than himself—the literature a picture in words, the picture a piece of literary composition; and he had worked in this way for years without ever coming to any particular success, when 'Vanity Fair' suddenly burst forth, convincing all fit critics in a moment that here was a work of genius. Without any further delay or question he came at once to the very highest rank, with but two rivals who could keep level ground with him—the fine imagination of the late Lord Lytton, and the lower yet popular and undeniable genius of Dickens. Of these three, Thackeray was the one who carried himself most entirely into his work. He had the variety, the changeableness, the power of rapid transformation which is to be found only in the finest intelligences. He was by turns humorous, contemptuous, tender—a moralist, a jester, a laughing philosopher, a cynic; yet with a vein of pathos infinitely touching and true, which went to the hearts of his readers. The commonplace was not in him. Whenever he looked at a scene it began to twinkle all over with lamps of meaning, gleams of humour and fun that lit up the landscape, and sudden tears that fell before you knew, and, before you knew, were dried by as sudden laughter. He loved the paradoxes of nature too well perhaps to content, at least at the outset, the matter-of-fact reader; and he had a pleasure in showing not only what lingerings of tenderness and good feeling there might be in some disreputable sinner, but what foolishness and pettiness might dwell in the bosoms of good men.

This latter peculiarity made him often misunderstood by those innocent critics who are more fond of abstract virtue in a book than of the real weaknesses and shadows of humanity—or who, at least, insist upon some one exhibition of an author's faith in the ideal. But Thackeray could not consent to worship the abstract virtues. The moment he caught sight of them, a gleam of not unkindly malice awoke in his eye. Love of mischief, love of contradiction, impelled an onslaught. The very perfection of the outline drawn forth before him filled him with longing to pull it to pieces. When he had done this, as likely as not he might put the ragged pieces kindly together again, or even show you how much better than you thought, was the being whom he refused to allow you to take on trust at all. Nobody has done such credit to the stupid gentleman with his good instincts and dull yet noble loyalty and steadfastness. Though he pretended to reject the very idea of a hero, it was he who first revealed to the world the heroic possibilities of truth and of suffering that might exist in such a rudimentary being as his Rawdon Crawley, or in the bosom of a poor little dissipated, stupid Foker — moved

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thereto, no doubt, by something of the same love of paradox and whimsical pathetic preference for the people whom nobody else could be found to defend or stand up for. It pleased his kind fantastic humour to throw its softest gleams upon the meanest places, and abash you with revelations of good just where you felt most confident that nothing good could be found. He has never attempted to draw a perfect character, except, perhaps, Colonel Newcome, who, but for the alloy of a little bombast and innocent vanity in his first appearances, would be as pure a hero as the greatest idealist could desire. But such a character as Becky Sharp, for instance, though she captivated the world, frightened many a gentle reader who found in that bad but charming young person the type of woman in whom the author delighted, and could not pardon him for the foolishness of his Amelia, his good heroine, whose sweetness was as exasperating as the iniquities of the other were delightful. The gradual working out of Becky is an effort more sustained than anything which the mere charm of the paradox could account for; and yet that piquant contradiction of common belief runs through every detail, and enlivens the labour in a way which even the common spectator can understand. Her selfishness yet good-nature, her entire indifference to everything but her own interest, yet real power of self-sacrifice when that is necessary, and faculty of pleasing and making happy those whom she is using for her own purposes, are quite captivating to the imagination. We are entirely sorry, and sympathise in her genuine regret, at not being able to marry old Sir Pitt when he proposes to her, notwithstanding all the ludicrous baseness of the situation; and throughout, the pluck, the dauntlessness, the brightness, the unfailing resources of Becky triumph over our moral sense, and carry us with her almost to the end of her career. We have always thought that her indifference to her child was a mistake in the picture, unless it is indeed a deliberate departure, when things become tragic, from the lighter principle of the beginning, which was to keep us always in good-humour with the most perfectly good-humoured of heroines. The original Becky made her little pupils love her, and would no doubt have secured her son as her partisan too, had not her sun begun to go down, and the tragical shadows of the conclusion required that we should be willing to permit her disappearance among them. It is the only failure in this wonderful effort of art. But Thackeray's genius was averse to endings: its very greatness lay in the clear perception he had of the fragmentary, broken, always beginning never ending character of life; that strange principle of immortality in the midst of mortality, which balks all rules, scorns experience, ignores age, and never allows itself to come to any solemnity of conclusion so long as existence itself goes on—a mystery without close.

This is not the time, however, to enter into any discussion of Thackeray's works. Whatever he did he inspired with that wealth of variety, that whimsical play of life, that rapid change of sentiment and glimmering of broken lights and shadows, which are characteristic of him. His narrative was a long-continued flow of conversation following the wanderings of a playful fancy, digressing, returning, stopping to throw a stone there, a flower here—to point out many a passing incident, which was subtly worked in, you could not tell how, to the story and the subject before him. Other artists might use a broader treatment, and put in with more historical seriousness the carefully-

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posed figures of their composition; but as you followed out his long-continued monologue from point to point, the people you met there stood forth as if you had met them in the streets, dotted out with bits of insignificant detail, with jest and laughter and sudden pathetic suggestion and flash of merry ridicule —not rigid portraits any one of them, but breathing, living, doing wise and foolish things, as real as the daylight. Once or twice only in the whole circle of his creations his sweet temper and genial toleration failed him, and a gleam of vindictiveness lights up the landscapes; generally he is good to everybody, even to the good people whom it is his instinct to avoid, because everybody else approves of them, but whom he never seizes upon savagely as some great writers do. The banter which he employs is penetrating, and turns the victim inside out, it is true—but there is no malignity in the sleight of hand with which he peels off the wrappings which conceal all that is poor and pitiful and false from the common eye. Even in his graver moments the gleam of fun is never quite out of his eyes, but lurks there ready to light up again all the lesser details of the subject, and relieve the mind from the painful strain of moral disenchantment. If we touch the depths for a moment, and feel the indignant swell of pain over injustice, next page sends us on laughing at the poor figure which the tyrant cuts, or the petty vengeance which turns the sinner's bed into one of thorns, not roses. The very love of variety in him, and inability to harp upon one string, takes bitterness out of his satire. Perhaps the conclusion is less highly moral, and the laugh, though half sad, which rounds the whole is more hopeless than denunciation; but, such as it is, it has been the utterance of some of the finest of human intelligences; and how many of us are glad to take refuge in it amid all the miseries and confusions of the world!

The character of Mr. Thackeray's illustrations has always struck ourselves as very quaintly original. Quite independent of their merit as art, they were always to some extent literary compositions, and full of the very spirit of the writer, or rather, which is more distinct still, of the spirit in which he wrote. Those comic or sentimental personages had always a consciousness of the reader which goes against the very principle of illustration, and yet was most oddly illustrative of the author's prevailing turn of mind and feeling. The first that occurs to us as an example of what we say, is a little picture which we remember among the illustrations of the 'Rose and the Ring,' and in which a certain pretty little Betsinda, the small heroine with whom that charming extravaganza begins, is dancing before the king and queen, with the much-hoped-for remuneration of a bun before her eyes. The little creature looks at us out of her few slight lines of engraving, taking us into her confidence, with a whole volume of fun in her eyes. How grand they are! what old guys and sham potentates! she is saying; and what fun it is to be making believe to look up to them and think their approbation so much worth gaining! The same feeling runs through all the pictures. It is at us, not at her companions in the scene, that Becky is always looking with a twinkle in her eye of confidential amusement. She takes in everybody about her, but she knows she does not take in the reader; therefore she elevates her little eyebrow and gives him a glance out of the corner of her demure eyes. She has no concealments from him—he understands what are the real feelings in her mind, and knows her schemes, and has a certain sympathy

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in what she is aiming at. This is not the principle upon which any ordinary illustrator could work; (if, alas! illustrators had any principle of work at all except how to get it out of their hands with the least trouble!) but it is very telling in its way, in the peculiar circumstances which make the writer and the illustrator the same person. When he takes the pencil into his hand, the familiar instrument, first-used-and-dreamt-of tool, becomes so much more entirely himself than even his pen, that what he does for us in the course of his narrative, showing us all the world behind the scenes and the strings by which his puppets are pulled—the personages of the story themselves do for us in the pictures, laughing stealthily over their shoulders, and throwing a revelation in a look with imperceptible nod and gesture which we alone are supposed to see. A reflection of his own countenance, with its half-laughing half-benign expression and air of spectatorship, steals into the faces of his characters. They become conscious all at once of playing their parts, and of playing them not badly, except for us who have heard all about it, and know precisely what is going on.

This curious characteristic of one portion of his work would show how entirely Thackeray's heart was in this lighter and more casual branch of his labours, if we did not know already how he loved the art which was not to be his vocation in life. This is a feeling which has been shared by many great artists, as all the world knows. Something by which they were not destined to gain their power has been the beloved ideal pursuit of their souls. Thackeray was too sensible not to be aware when he had at last made the grand step which carried him at once to reputation and fortune, and it is impossible to imagine that he had not real enjoyment in work so thoroughly marked with all the peculiarities of his character, and which was so evidently enjoyable; but to his latest days his pencil was his favourite and most cherished instrument. "The hours which he spent upon his drawing-blocks and sketch-book brought no fatigue or weariness; they were of endless interest and amusement to him, and rested him when he was tired," says his daughter. Few men so great in one way have a secondary pursuit cherished by themselves by which they can keep still a little world apart from the public for their own enjoyment and that of their friends. But this was Thackeray's fortunate position. When Dante drew his angel, according to the poet, it was for the lady of his thoughts, the supreme Beatrice alone; and when Raphael

> "with the silver-pointed pencil,
> Else he only used to draw Madonnas,"

made sonnets instead, that too was "once, and only once, and for one only." True to all poetic nature is this desire—

> "No artist lives and loves that longs not
> (Ah the prize!) to find his love a language
> Fit and fair and simple and sufficient,
> Using nature that's an art to others.
> Not this one time art that's turned his nature.
> Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
> None but would forego his proper dowry.
> Does he paint? he fain would write a poem.
> Does he write? he fain would paint a picture.
> Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
> Once, and only once, and for one only,
> So to be the man, and leave the artist,
> Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow."

It was not, however, the wistful depth of this supreme devotion which moved Thackeray. There are cuttings-off and impoverishments of life which are more pathetic than the deepest sorrows which can be expressed in words. The "once, and only once, and for one only," was

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not permitted to the warm heart and tender soul of our great humorist; but he had—and who will say there was not sufficient compensation in it?—the sweet alternative of children to please by the art which was not his art, and friends to entertain and a home to enliven. He did this instead of the Dante-picture and the Raphael-sonnets, for which his life had no place. In their languors of childish sickness, in the times he was absent from them, even when they had other children to entertain and wanted help for their simple merry-making, the great writer took his pencil and drew pictures for his little daughters and their little friends. No one thought anything of those works of love which were lavished upon them, which were done for play, in moments when the world and its thoughts were absent—until now, when time and death have given sacredness to everything he touched, when the heirs of his love and of his gifts bring this little basket of fragments with tender hands, to throw a gleam of tearful yet smiling light upon the records of their now empty home.

It is the associations which thus hang about it, and which, even to those who knew nothing of him, must throw a touching light upon the character of Thackeray, that give its chief interest to this book. No new revelation of talent or capability is in it; the drawings are many of them extremely clever, and the scraps of description whimsical and charming; but that which gives it a special character is the glow of domestic ease and cheerful leisure, the reflection of a peaceful home, the friendly, genial gleams of side light, showing the man in his least serious moments, which we find enshrined within its pages. What prodigality and wealth of work it shows! Sitting at his table, talking, no doubt, to his friends or his children, here are the heads he scribbles on a page, with playful extravagance, for want of thought, like the milk-boy's whistle. Here are the designs, ideas, and intentions never carried out, or reflections of things which were afterwards carried out, and which we remember in more elaborate guise in other publications. How little he thought of these chance productions is very touchingly described in Miss Thackeray's preface. "The pictures were rarely preserved by himself," she says, "nor put away by us with any care. The familiar stream flowed on, loved but unheeded by us; and among the many drawings he devised, only a certain number remain in our possession. In all my remembrance, he never had one of his own drawings framed; and when I was a child I remember a great scrap-book which was given me to play with, and to work my will upon. I can only once remember a questioning word from him concerning some scissor-points with which I had ornamented some of his sketches. In later years, by his desire, I have washed off the drawings from many and many a wood-block; and I remember once destroying his whole day's work in my anxiety to be of use. But although he certainly never wished us to make much of his work, all that belonged to it and to his art was of vivid and serious reality to him, and of unfailing interest and suggestion." This affords us, we think, a picture better than any of the pictures that follow—more genial, coming home to the multitude, which is slow about art, but has perceptions in every point of nature. Men of letters sometimes watch over their fame with a jealous care which makes an audience even of the family circle; but these are generally lesser lights of the firmament; and true genius with any greatness in it seldom glorifies

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itself at the expense of the simplicity of nature. Thackeray at home was not the great author but the dear father, whose thousand tender qualities were far more dear to his children than the fame which was extraneous and out of place in that warm domestic centre. What he could do and did do, was little to those to whom he himself was everything. "The familiar stream flowed on, loved but unheeded." What description could be given more natural and more affecting? Throughout the volume those soft family touches make up the charm and interest. The lions that figured in the 'Rose and the Ring,' roaring and rushing, were scribbled off to enliven a childish sick-bed; and the ingenious and tricky devices of the pack of cards had a somewhat similar origin. Sometimes without thought, mere idle occupation of the busy brain and hand which had no comprehension of sheer do-nothingness—sometimes, on the contrary, giving the affectionate zest of work for them, to the empty hours in which he was separated from the creatures he loved best—the running accompaniment of his life is noted on these fragmentary pages. Sometimes the drawing is vigorous and powerful, with meaning in it. Some times it is nothing more than the scribblings of a blotting-book; but however it comes, it shows us the soft measure, the undertone of harmony, the tune to which his life was set.

The immediate object of the publication, however, is to give a little genuine memento of Thackeray, and of the style which was peculiarly his own, with the sanction of such authority as marks the work authentic. The 'Orphan of Pimlico,' which gives its name to the publication, is a very slight sketch in the style of the 'Novels by Popular Authors,' of which already we have various specimens from his hand. Miss Maria Theresa Wiggleworth, "for many years governess in families of the highest distinction," and whose irreproachable character is supported by reference to the "*revered clergy* of the district," is not, however, presented to us as a parody, but upon her merits; and the tale of love, despair, betrayal and punishment, which she tells in the most elegant language, is illustrated with the portraits of all the fine people concerned, in various sensational moments, ending with a tragical tableau, in which a weak-minded husband and a wicked lover perish almost at the same moment, and general woe is distributed in just proportion to all concerned. Both the composition of this highly moral, exciting, and mournful tale, and its illustrations, are eminently characteristic. They were first "begun at Kensington, one evening by lamp-light;" and done in scraps, the last first, with the caprice of a family joke, filling the quiet evenings with fun and laughing occupation. Another set of drawings deal with the adventures of Prince Polonio, a precursor apparently of Prince Giglio, the hero of the 'Rose and the Ring.' "In the first page (which has drifted away into some unknown space) the travellers come upon a mysterious personage, called the Little Assessor of Tübingen, lying asleep under a tree, with blue facings to his coat. My father would never explain who the little Assessor was, or what he was doing. He said it was a mystery." The playing-cards belong to the same playful portion of holiday-work. All kinds of imaginations play about the black and red pips, which come in with the most whimsical effect, thanks to the skilful manipulation of the artist. Sometimes they are black "nigger" faces, illustrating fantasies of his American tours—sometimes historical *silhouettes*. A three of clubs, in which the Duke

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of Marlborough is the hero, one spot representing his own pigtail, another that of his horse, and a third nestling in his cocked hat, is very clever. The red cards require still more pains and trouble; and the back view of Miss Smith at the piano, with a diamond let into her shoulders, in delightful adaptation to the costume of the period, is almost as good as the scene representing "Napoleon in the midst of the Old Guard," where one of the spots of the eight of diamonds comes into the dress of the emperor with the most admirable effect. "My father once said," says Miss Thackeray, "that one of the achievements of his life which had given him most unalloyed satisfaction, was the introduction of Napoleon's waistcoat as it appears in this battle-scene." Never was more delightful, genial foolery. Dr. Birch's school, perhaps a less elevated effort, ought to go to the heart of all schoolboys, with the comical victim in the foreground, and the rueful faces of the "boys who go up next." These are nothings, the reader will perceive; yet they are full both of fun and pathos, and more significant of the workman than matters much more important.

Along with this genial play of exuberant and delightful nonsense, are a few more elaborate drawings. Perhaps the best of these is the figure (as is supposed) of a gentleman with whom the public made acquaintance at Mrs. Perkins's ball. "This drawing," Miss Thackeray says, entering into it with hereditary humour, "may recall Mr. Frederick Minchin, in the vivacity of early youth, before he had attained to that quiet dignity for which he was afterwards remarkable." The flying figure of this, alas! now somewhat antiquated beau, in high black stock and collar—airy as Terpsichore herself, yet serious as all great performers are, in full impulse of a dance less languid than those we are now used to see—is delightful. He is afloat, but decorous, poised in air, yet, one feels sure, certain never to come down upon any partner's toes, or otherwise commit himself by pranks unbecoming the perfect propriety of this model of all the graces of the ball-room. This is pure comedy on its genteelest level. There is a touch of tragedy, however, in the somewhat appalling little picture of children playing in the Glasgow gutters — a drawing in which there is almost a Hogarthian touch, in its keen perception of the misery and unloveliness of the little group, which yet are not beyond the reach of childish grace and mirth. The two Scotch sketches, indeed, are little favourable to our beloved country. A more truculent audience could scarcely have been than the MacGuffies and MacDuffies whom the lecturer sees before him, and whose harsh countenances he leaves on record. Let us hope we are not quite so appalling in the flesh. One of the most amusing of the sketches is that which represents the interior of a railway carriage, in which an old clergyman is lecturing a poor lady convicted of having the objectionable publication in her hand, on the enormity of reading 'Punch' (in its early days), while Thackeray himself and Douglas Jerrold look on and listen on the adjoining bench. "Are you aware who are the conductors of that paper? and that they are Chartists, deists, atheists, anarchists, and socialists to a man? I have it on the best authority that they meet together once-a-week in a tavern in St. Giles's, where they concoct their infamous print. The chief part of their income is derived from threatening letters, which they send to the nobility and gentry. Their principal writer is a returned convict." To this conversation Jerrold is listening in the corner, with

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eyes looking back, and a comic solemnity, while Thackeray himself grins genial with benign countenance. The incident is said to have really occurred, and it is easy to understand the amusement which the two must have got out of it. We think we know the benevolent clerical critic who gives so fair and friendly an account of the "infamous print."

It is, however, impossible to go over the book in detail. There is nothing but fun and nonsense in it, and yet, curiously enough, the impression it makes is entirely tender and pathetic. We are less amused than touched by the soft breath of recollections, the love so delicately shadowed out, without a word that can profane or even vulgarise its sacredness, of which these pages are full. To those who knew Thackeray, this delicate suggestion of him must, we do not doubt, come home with wonderful meaning; but even to those who did not know the man, such indications of him as are to be found here will be more valuable than the details of vulgar volumes of biography. The world has nothing to do with the private griefs and struggles of a man who respects his own privacy, and chooses to preserve it, none the less that he is a great author, and much in the eye of the world. To those who like to excite and to satisfy the curiosity of the crowd, there may be nothing undignified, nothing paltry, in the desire to appeal to the public for a posthumous arbitration of their difficulties and quarrels. But Mr. Thackeray was not of this disposition, and we think he was right. Yet without any story given, or any secrets disclosed, here is a sketch of him, shadowy and slight as his own sketches, telling little, yet all that it is needful to know. The cold critic who does not care for such a true and affecting human revelation, may think the drawings of but little importance to be thus carefully reproduced; but with all whose interest in his character has ever been awakened every line will tell, and the least careful of the pictures will be probably the most interesting. A solemn document formally drawn up does not give us half so much information about the writer as does the bit of blotting-paper or torn scrap out of his waste-basket, upon which he has jotted down inadvertently the vagaries that crossed his mind during the writing of it—the trying of a new pen, or effort to get the old one in order. The scribblings of Thackeray's amused and amusing fancy are so many windows into the man, by which we may see his real heart; and how genial is all we find, how full of innocent fun and light-heartedness, that lightness of heart which is the happiest gift of God, and accompanies its possessor through good and evil fortune, giving him moments of gaiety in the midst of trouble, and keeping him alive! Those unfortunate people who cannot get any good of the passing gleams of amusement which cross the deepest darkness by times, what a much harder lot life must be to them! But to such a man as this, life however checkered is not a hard lot. It is full of the sweetest compensations—not those artificial makings-up which we laugh at under the title of poetic justice, but compensations of nature, tremblings of light through tears, soft outbursts of laughter in the midst of sighing, perpetual rebellions of the unconquered soul against its secret foe, that dread and dull monotony which eats out the charm of life. Monotony, it is evident, could not be where Thackeray was. Nature in him was always astir, always open-eyed—seeing more than others, and generally seeing with genial observation, notwithstanding that

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penetrating insight into the darker side of human motive which was in him, and which is the one thing that impairs his genius to the idealist. How a man so full of the milk of human kindness, so tender in his humour, so warm in his affections, should have been gifted just with that special perception of the weaknesses and mixed impulses of human nature—its deficiency in the absolutely good, and perpetual, ever visible alloy—looks like one of the paradoxes of which he was so fond,—but so it was. Perhaps the very variety of his mind, refusing acquiescence in a dull level of goodness as much as in every other dull level, prompted the laughing search for other qualities and impulses which are but too readily found whenever they are sought for. But Thackeray was too true a humorist, too genial a man, ever to dissect with bitterness. The impulse to laugh, and to find occasion for laughing, might be too strong in him; but even his rebellion against fictitious standards, and the sham which passes muster in the world, and is often more esteemed than the true, was never sharp and bitter. It was amusement more than indignation that moved him; a soft hope, a friendly conviction that, after all, these foibles and feeblenesses had to be judged by "larger, other eyes than ours," was always in his mind; not Ithuriel's spear revealing the baser nature in sudden force of native hideousness, but rather a twinkling, mischievous illumination of many lights suddenly catching the sinner when he thought of it least, and confounding him by quick exposure and ridicule. This was natural to his mind, not lofty scorn and moral indignation. He loved to expose false pretences, to break in the paper walls of social falsehood, to show to us the general atmosphere of deception, even of ourselves, in which so many of us live and breathe; but he never judged harshly, nor pronounced any bitter sentence; and he never failed to pay his tribute to the finer and truer nature when it came in his way. It has been objected to him often that his Dobbin had splay feet, and that his Amelia was a fool. Well—there are fools who hold our hearts when wiser folks throw them away; and as for poor Dobbin's ugliness, that, too, was one of the paradoxes his creator loved. He could not contemplate human nature without seeing them; and to his temper, that fantastic, pathetic contrast of external appearances with inward realities was always more attractive than any other aspect of life.

However, no critic will be clever enough to find one touch of cynicism in this tender memorial of Thackeray which his children have offered so modestly to his friends known and unknown—the latter class taking in all English readers. In one of the poems of his Irish book, we remember, he greets the new morning as it rises with the thought that "my little girls are waking, and making their prayers perhaps for me." Let the reader pardon a defective memory if the quotation is not correct. It is as a memorial of this most beautiful of loves that we receive the little collection of fragments—kind play and pleasantry of the days that are over, turned into pathos by death and time. Soft fall the dews, soft lie the snows, upon the kind father's sleeping head, once astir with crowds of tender and of gentle fancies! The man of whom such relics only are preserved is surely of the number of those whose names smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

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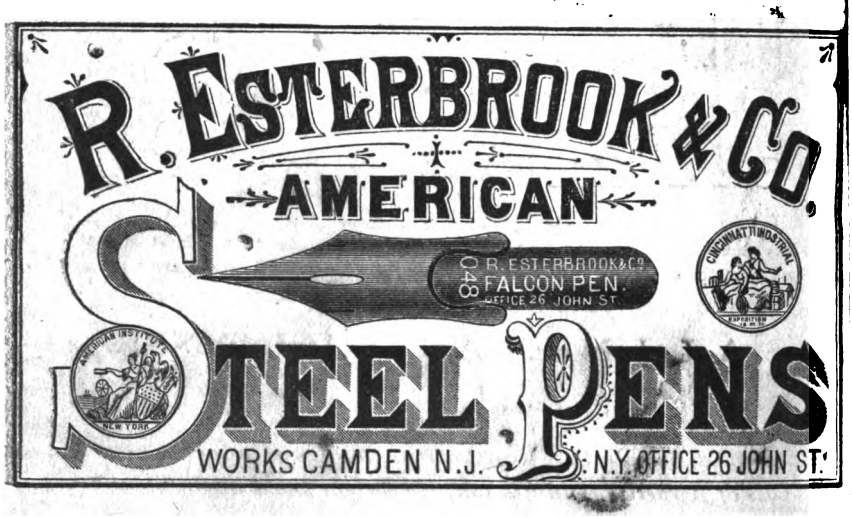

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